

# **History of 115 Air Transport Unit (ATU) RCAF March 1957 to 29 May 1967<sup>i</sup>**

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**UNEF Otter and Caribou flying over Gaza Strip (1964)**

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## ***Dedicated to all UNEF 1 and UNEF 2 Peacekeepers...***

Thirty-two Canadians lost their lives serving with this force.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Background**

The United Nations Emergency Force 1 in the Middle East came into being after the Suez crisis of 1956.<sup>iii</sup> The following history of 115 ATU does not attempt to compare UNEF 1, or specifically the 115 ATU air elements, with its successors in the Congo and Cyprus or UNEF 2. (UNEF 1 was in a “sideshow” with 115 ATU in the Yemen and 115 did provide men and material to Congo).

The role of UNEF1 – established 24 November 1956 - was to separate the opposing Forces and to supervise the cease fire between Israel and Egypt. After the Israelis withdrew from the joint French, British, Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal the new UNEF peacekeeping contingent moved from the Canal Zone to their “new homes to be “at Gaza, Rafah and for the Canadian air element, El Arish airport.

“.... In terms of fulfilling role of providing air transport and reconnaissance ,it only made sense for 115 Communications Flight move closer to UNEF Headquarters once the initial phase of establishing the peacekeeping force was on the ground. ....When UNEF the *UNEF was originally formed Ottawa designated the RCAF unit as an autonomous unit not reporting to the Canadian Commander at Rafah.*<sup>iv</sup>



**Canadian 2 ½ ton trucks arrive from Canada on HMCS Magnificent at Port Said  
Egypt**



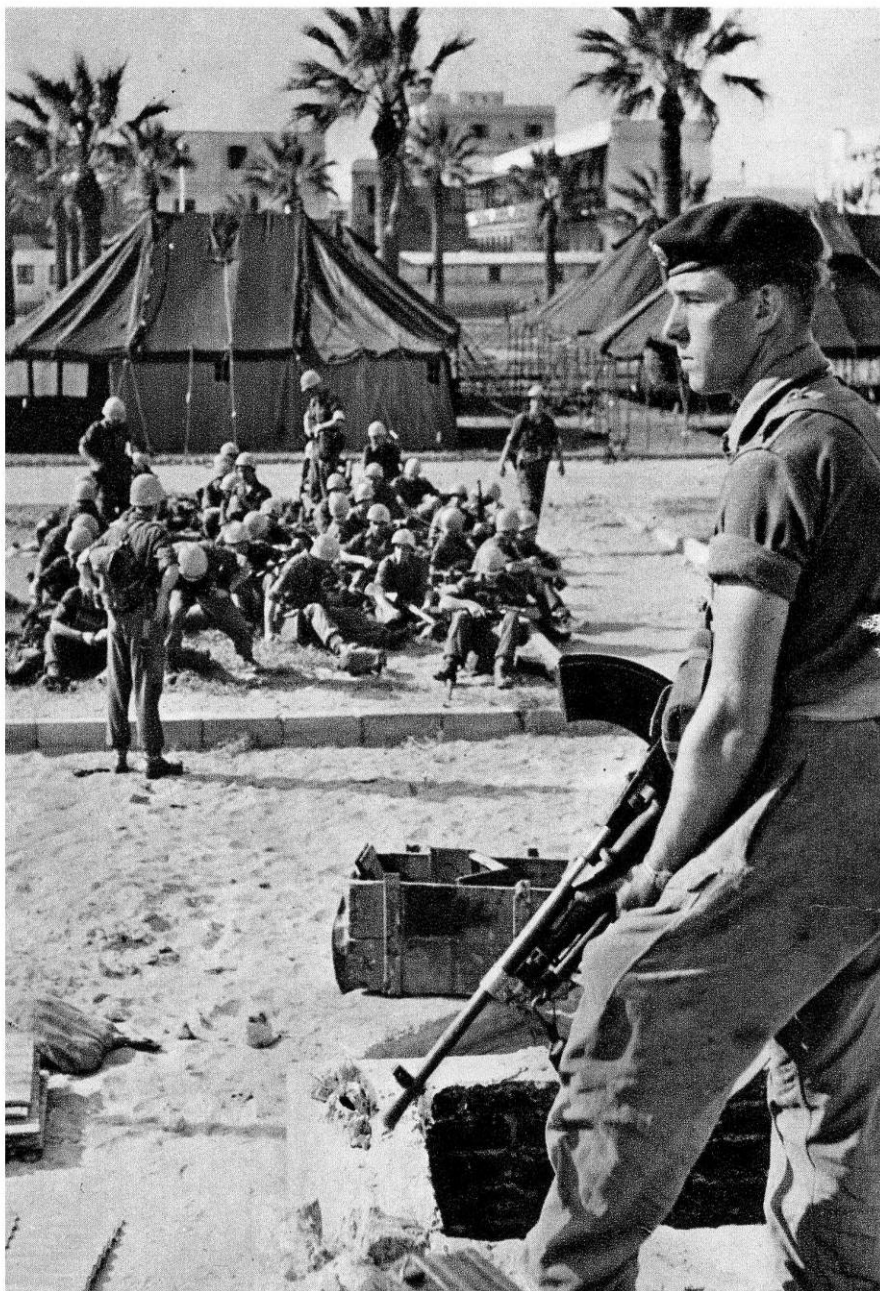
**First contingent of UNEF 1 Swedish contingent moving cautiously from Canal Zone into Sinai and Israelis withdraw - next stop is Rafah/Gaza /El Arish**



**First contingent of UNEF 1 contingent moving into Sinai -note number of different vehicles & different marking and that all had not been painted white yet**

The First United Nations Emergency Force was made up of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Colombia, Finland, India, Brazil, Indonesia and Yugoslavia. By 1962 UNEF 1 was down to a seven a contingent force: Columbia, Indonesia to withdraw their contingents.<sup>v</sup>





**1957 "Just arrived" Norwegians at Abu Suweir Egypt being guarded by British Commando**

El Arish is about halfway between City of Gaza and the Suez Canal. The living area or Quarters (Marina) was very close to the Mediterranean Sea and the airfield about 7 miles inland. To a new arrival from Canada the RCAF Establishment at Marina El Arish Egypt, looks quite pleasant. The sound of surf washing upon the Mediterranean shore gives him an agreeable sensation. The

illusion, however, lasts about as long as his newly pressed summer uniform. When temperatures climb above 100 F *or 38 C* or a scorching wind screeches across the desert creating a Khamsin (sandstorm) both men and machines are sorely tried. Tropical Worsteds (*TWs in military lingo*) and the standard flat hat give way to shorts, light cotton shirt and the UNEF beret”<sup>vi</sup>



**Some of the Canadian support vehicles went by rail to Rafah after being unloaded from HMCS Magnificent on 11 Jan 1957. On Maggie were 232 vehicles - 33 jeeps, 10 three-quarter ton trucks, 82 two and-a-half ton trucks, 2 dump trucks, 14 shop repair trucks, 1 water tank truck, 1 recovery truck, 2 ambulances, 9 pick-up trucks and 78 trailers. In addition, there were 7 tons of ammunition, 55,000 gallons of gasoline and 300 tons of other supplies. Also aboard were four Otter type aircraft.**

Canada's decision to provide UNEF with an air transport support element afforded ATC a "live" exercise in mobility. Late one Monday night in November, 1956, No. 435 Squadron then based at Namao airport, near Edmonton, received a warning order that it might have to move to the Middle East. The next morning the alert became a reality and two hours later the first C-119 (Flying Boxcar) was on its way to Toronto.



At Toronto the RCAF aircraft markings gave way to the blue and white insignia of the UN and in short order, 12 aircraft loaded to the doors with spare engines, propellers, ground handling equipment, tools and men were winging their way across the Atlantic to the Mediterranean Sea. Within two days after the movement order had been received at Edmonton the first RCAF C-119 swung into service with the UN. (CC-130s Hercules did not enter RCAF service till 1960)



**Picture of RCAF Squadron 435 (based in Edmonton) Fairchild CC-119G Boxcar used to transport equipment and supplies to Egypt**

From Capodichino airport near Naples in Italy 435 Squadron joined by 436 Squadron operated with all the urgency of war. It was the first time since World War II that the RCAF had deployed a complete unit outside of North America. Airlifting troops, mail and equipment 1300 miles from Naples Italy to Abu Suweir airport Egypt near the Suez Canal was a long one. The crews found problems with the desert sand and navigational facilities, the latter being most important as precision flying was required

during to stay within a very narrow air corridor and times laid down by Egypt . The UNEF continued this mission until the "Six Day War" of 1967.<sup>vii</sup> All manners of cargo and personnel of many nations were airlifted into Egypt to help start an historic world police force.

"There were interesting diversions to the thrice weekly shuttle between Capodichino and Abu Suweir Egypt when one crew contributed by 436 Squadron was required to fly Egyptian POWs (their vessel had been sunk by Israelis in Red Sea) from Djibouti in French Somaliland via Wadi Halfa and Khartoum to Cairo - a 1900 mile detour to get them home."<sup>viii</sup>



**Douglas CC-129 Dakota in UN marking**

Four Otters were shipped to Egypt on the HMCS Magnificent arriving on 11 Jan 1957. (*How the other four Otters were shipped to Egypt remains a mystery hopefully now to be solved as they*

*would not fit in a C-119. One reliable observer of the times - a then serving member then of 408 Squadron- said the wings were taken off the Otters and fuselage and wings loaded discretely into "loaned" USAF Hercules aircraft and flown to an American base - probably Naples - and re-assembled there. The RCAF had no Hercules at the time as Hercules were acquired by RCAF in 1960)*

At Abu Suweir Egypt in November 1956, 115 Communications Flight was created. In January 1957, Number 435 Squadron returned to Canada but left No.114 Communications flight with four CC-119 Flying boxcars. In September 1957 the RCAF moved from Abu Suweir to refurbished El Arish airfield. When 114 Communications Flight at Naples was disbanded the RCAF detachment changed its name from 115 Communications Flight to 115 Air Transport Unit. The 115 ATU started with three CC-129 Dakotas and four CC-123 Otters. <sup>ix</sup>

115 ATU had strength of approximately 90 RCAF personnel .The original strength of flying personnel till the arrival of the Caribous in late 1960 was nine pilots, three radio officers and two navigators<sup>x</sup> and ended up with 7 pilots after the Caribous arrived early 60s. There were 17 Army personnel attached for all purposes to 115 ATU: 3 members of RCASC for movement control /air supply and two RCA Postal Corps for mail and the rest being RCASC Signal Corps to operate the ground to air signal equipment at El Arish and at Sharm el Sheik.



**Note UN flag on tail of CC- 54 /DC-4 North Star from 426 Squadron flying out of Base Trenton.**

115 ATU was really at two locations. The living quarters were at an old British rest camp of WW2 – the airport 7 miles inland. The buildings at Marina are 2 storied adobe structures encircled by verandas, with 10 foot ceilings, small windows and thick walls - actually quite cool inside.

Milk was unobtainable and fresh vegetable hard to obtain- with fish and scrawny chickens plentiful. Beirut was soon to become 115 ATU's grocery store for fresh produce. In addition the local water could not be drunk – a shower yes – but careful – that water was trucked in and stored on the roof in a large tank. The water tank on one visit to roof had a nice collection of green mold growing on the sides and floating in the tank. No ice cubes – brush your teeth and then use Canadian Club to clean tooth brush and mouth!-the eggs even had to be soaked in chlorinated water – salt pills – even malaria pills on the Mess Table with the salt and pepper -as mosquitoes during rainy season came in swarms. Shoes had to be shaken in the morning – the newcomers learned quickly to distinguish between the land crabs which were visitors to the quarters from scorpions.

All this and most if not all 115 officers and men had a mild form of dysentery -some their entire tour - called "Gypo gut"- everyone had it including the 115 ATU Doctor -it was always the matter of degree of "upset stomach".

The recreation program revolved around the Mess and Canteens - the PX had one counter of toothpaste, razor blades and bars of soap. There were a few books but so old and arcane that few were loaned out.

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<sup>i</sup> 115ATU was originally called 115 Communications Flight - the date of changeover for names is unclear-probably around the time they moved to El Arish from Abu per Roundel Magazine Vol 10 #2 of March 1958 article *UNEF's Air Support* by F/L McVeity RCAF page 2

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/peacekeeping/unef.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.canadahistory.com/sections/War/peacekeeping/unefi.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Page 137 of Pearson's Peacekeepers -Canada and the United Nations Emergency Force 1956 -67 by Michael K Carroll UBC Press 2009

<sup>v</sup> The Indonesian Contingent (582 men) was withdrawn in Sept 1957- Finland ( 255 men ) in December 1957 - Columbia (522 men ) in early 1958

<sup>vi</sup> Page 3 of RCAF Roundel "Our Men in The Desert" by F/L T.G. Coughlin Vol 15 #8 Oct 1962

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.airforce.forces.gc.ca/site/hist/modern\\_e.asp](http://www.airforce.forces.gc.ca/site/hist/modern_e.asp)

<sup>viii</sup> page 23 of RCAF Roundel "The Flying Elephants:4386 Sqn History Part 4 S/L Heathcote Vol 14 #6 Jul Aug 1962

<sup>ix</sup> page 4 of RCAF Roundel "UNEF's Air Support : A Record of Achievement" F/L McVeity Vol 10 No 2 1958

<sup>x</sup> page 7 of RCAF Roundel "Somewhere East of Suez" by F/O Burge Vol 12 No 2 March 1960





**The 115 ATU Post Exchange or PX - note hours of opening were from 3 pm till the movie!- but closed on Friday!**

Evenings took on a special luster -movies and mail call. Mail would come in on the returning Caribou from Beirut. There was a Canadian Army Postal section at both El Arish and at Beirut airport to handle the morale building letters from home. (This was in the days of no internet or telephones to Canada). The radio picked up 99% Arabic music and programs - only the BBC broadcasting news from Cyprus kept 115 members in the early days in contact with the outside world.





**Top picture - general picture inside Marina**

**Bottom picture -Everything set up for the evening movie as seen from the roof of 115 ATU Officers Dining Room**

The movies were shown outdoors between the Officers Mess and Quarters and the NCOs barracks. The NCOs watched from their balcony on one side and the officers from the roof of the Officers Mess. In the rows in front of the screen rows of benches are set for the airmen, the army personnel including some of the Yugoslav contingent that guarded the Marina and occasionally some Indian contingent platoon who had the lonely job of guarding the airport seven miles inland. Oh how the Indian troops loved the movies! "*Bollywood in the Sinai.*" (In the first few years the Swedes had guarded 115 ATU - they left leaving a Swede policeman with dog behind to patrol inside Marina. The Yugos had been airfields guards in 1961 1962)



**View above of new UNEF hangar, El-Arish airport under constuction 1957-58 - General Burns the Canadian Commander is somewhere in group -again notice the**

vehicle is still khaki/brown -soon to be white<sup>xi</sup>

At El Arish airport 115 co-existed with an Egyptian Squadron who had new Mig -17s. One evening in 1965 the Egyptian pilots were invited over to the RCAF Officers Mess – the Canadian pilots were appalled to find the young new operational Mig 17 pilots had fewer hours of flying – the CO Wing Commander Paul Hartman was to mention later that not one of them would have been allowed to fly in Canada without an instructor seated behind him as they had so few flying hours.



A new hangar was constructed at El Arish airport which had two runways. The original runway built to British specifications was used by the Egyptian Air Force –the Canadians were situated at the end of the second runway built by the Egyptians. The runway was found wanting after a Yugoslav military passenger plane tires

<sup>xi</sup> UN picture **120917** -used in accordance with UN Photo Usage Guidelines:  
<http://www.un.org/av/photo/guidelines.html>



went through the runway surface. After that, the weekly North Star that replaced the C-119 Boxcars had to park overnight on the other end of the British built runway. (The Egyptian hangars “assembled in Cairo” Mig 19s were at the other end. Good thing they never flew at night! The North Stars were guarded overnight by the Indian Army UNEF Contingent platoon that guarded the El Arish UNEF part of the airport after a North Star was broken into and ransacked one turnaround night.



**View above of UNEF El-Arish showing RCAF CC-108 Caribou aircraft loading**

**-note the small fork lift truck and the airplane tractor-the latter the only piece of equipment of all the Canadian Army and Air Force trucks ,vans etc to make it back during hasty withdrawal to Italy eventually Canada.**

The ground crew in shorts and shoes had a futile effort to keep cool as the airport was inland. But the aircraft servcability record was amazing in this stiffling heat and blowing sand. Most parts were in storage including a complete North Star engine which somehow had been shipped over in a protective cocoon. If an aircraft part was not available an urgent AOG message went out to Trenton and the part was shipped - usually by commercial aircraft to Beirut. As soon as the part arrived in Beirut a Caribou was despatched to fetch this precious part so a Caribou (there were four) or Otter (two -sometimes one) could fly again.



A North Star did break down in the regular weekly rotation flight. This meant a 2 to 4 day wait for the part. So the CO of 115 ATU decided to cut into and open the North Star engine cocoon in the corner of the hangar. The part was retrieved and the North Star left on time with happy officers and men who were returning home .Many an angry telegram was received by the CO W/C Hartman but he had made his decision and stood by it! The North Star weekly schedule and 115 ATU maintenance record of honour and hard work had been kept!

On the next flight arrived a complete replacement cocooned North Star Merlin engine! Only one problem- how to get it off the North star whose cargo door was 11 feet off the ground and heavy. The small fork lift in picture above –the only one at 115 ATU- had to be used . The forks of fork lift went up 11 feet and engaged the palate of the replacement North Star Merlin engine. That was great! Luck. Only one problem – the fork lift as can be judged from picture above was capable of lifting a palate load of flour or luggage – but NOT an Merlin aircraft engine. Send for another fork lift –but where –Cyprus or Pisa? Not enough time –must keep to schedule ! So six then seven then eight of the heavier ground crew men sat on the other end of fork lift as a counter balance. The engine moved out into space-teetered for a moment – and was slowly lowered to the ground. The Movement Control Officer was already trying to figure out how he would explain how he has “accidently dropped a North Star Merlin engine onto the tarmac”

As soon as a 115 plane landed birds flew out and started building nests in the tall tail of Caribou or Otter aircraft. No trees or palm trees in the desert –only lonely castor bushes. The last job of the ground crew was to remove the birds nests

114 Comm. Flight (made up of 435 and 436 personnel) at Naples flew a scheduled) shuttle flight between Italy and El Arish bringing in set up supplies and 115 Comm. Flight, based at El Arish–was employed for UN surveillance, reconnaissance, communications and medical evacuation operations in the Sinai.

Initially in the late 1950s and early 1960s 115 ATU operated three DC-3s and four Otters. There were then bi-weekly flights to Beirut .<sup>xii</sup>

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<sup>xii</sup> Page 6 RCAF Roundel “Somewhere East of Suez” by F/O Burge Vol 12 No 2 March 1960





*The new Canadian flag is raised in El Arish -notice rather flimsy protective fence & Medierranean Sea at top of picture -about 150 yards from the Camp- hence the 115 ATU Quarters being called "Marina"*

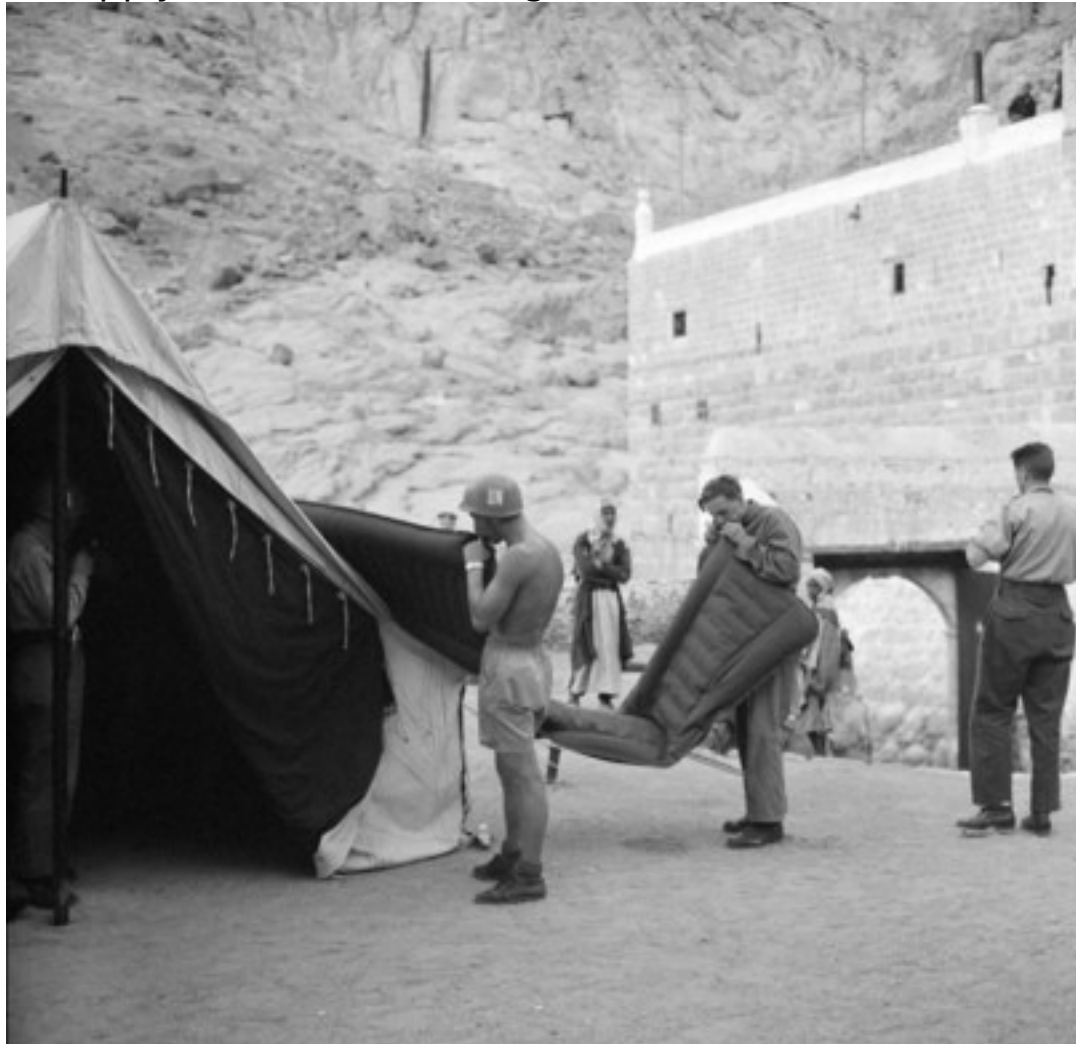
After monitoring the withdrawal of British/French and Israeli troops from canal area, 115 ATU's commitment was to conduct surveillance along the Armistice Demarcations Line or ADL which spread from the Mediterranean in the north and the International Frontier down to the Gulf of Aqaba - the most southerly tip of the Sinai Peninsula -and to re-supply all UNEF outposts along the ADL/IF by air.

In the reconnaissance role 115 ATU made daily flights with Otters and sometimes DC-3s along the 59 km Armistice Demarcation Line (ADL) and which separated Israel from the Gaza Strip and the 209 km International Frontier between the United Arab Republic (Egypt) and Israel. Having the ancient Dakotas and Otters painted white was a good idea one in the extreme 120 F/35 C heat of the afternoon s-all flying was supposed to end at noon .Flying in

extremes of hot weather affects the flow of air and stability. The old DC-3s were replaced by new Caribous in the early 1960s. Dakotas /Otters then Caribous patrolled the International Frontier (IF) which runs between the western border of the Gaza Strip to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

These flights were made at a bumpy 1000 feet to give good surveillance but would make Canadian Recce, Yugoslav or other contingent members brought along to assist a "bit queasy" . Also when an Otter met -or were called in - by a friendly Canadian contingent jeep a game of tag would develop. The Canadian Recce squadron jeeps had long antennas with a small flag on the end of antenna. The object of "game "was to clip the antennae with the wing. Strictly against the rules but sure relieved the boredom of a dull flight! Also did not help the new observers who were aboard!

Supply trips were also made to the most southerly tip of the Sinai to supply the Finnish contingent



**Finns setting up at St Catherine's Monastery - north of Sharm el Sheik**

later relieved by a Swedish contingent in the early 1960s. The Canadian Army provided RC Sigs -signal staff and two RCE - engineer personnel to man the water distillation plant. Stops were made along the way down to the most isolated outposts manned by detachments of the Yugoslav UNEF contingent at Ras El Nagib (or Naqb) (near Gulf of Aquaba on a salt bed) and El Kuntilla (or Quasaima or...) 50 miles north of Ras - both in the Egyptian side of the frontier and manned by Yugoslav soldiers. (The geographic names or spelling depended on the map you were using !)



**Mail Call UN style.....airmail delivery by RCAF to Yugoslav outpost!**

Incredible as it sounds the Yugoslavs loved to hear the sound of a Caribou or Otter. Why – Ice cream was brought into these hot desolate spots. How – dry ice kept it cool. How did they get ice cream when milk was never seen in El Arish or Rafah or Gaza UNEF compounds ever?? To this day no one has figured out – probably an “urban legend” but on the trips to these two outposts sitting at El Arish was the dry ice container delivered from the Yugoslav UNEF contingent whose compound was just down the road from the RCAF 115 ATU Marina living quarters.

Flights were made from El Arish to Beirut, welfare trips to a rented resort in Lebanese hills (later flown by chartered Middle East Airline Viscount aircraft), welfare trips to Cairo and the odd time special trips to Port Said. The trips-usually 3 to 4 times a week (this varied) had stops -not always- at Gaza and sometimes a stop in Jerusalem.

115 ATU had their own doctor (flight surgeon) as well as 7 pilots and an Admin /Finance Officer. The Commanding Officer was always a pilot.



**W/C Hartman CO of 115 ATU in 1965 - he was the last Canadian trained test pilot - with rest of his officers - actually the gentleman beside him is "Mr Nick" the Officers Mess barman !**

One late afternoon the Canadian Sigs radio officer at El Arish received an urgent message from the Swedish contingent commander - one of his men had acute appendicitis. Immediately a Caribou was sent to medically-evacuate the very sick man complete with the 115 ATU doctor with his medical kit. There was only one problem - there were no landing lights at the Sharm El Sheik airstrip and the plane would arrive but only after dark. The 115 Caribou was within sight of Sharm but the pilot did not have enough visibility to land safely. The pilot radioed his dilemma to the Swedish commander. The Swedish commander asked if the pilot was ready to land. "Yes" came the incredulous reply of pilot F/O "Hoppy" Hopkins.





**A daylight shot of “runway” at Sharm El Sheik**

Then through the cockpit window appeared a perfect row of landing lights. How? There were not enough vehicles to illuminate the landing area. On landing the answer became evident – toilet paper! The Swedish commander had gathered all the rolls of toilet paper - dipped the rolls in gasoline- and lit them all just before the Caribou landed. The flaming rolls gave enough light to enable the safe landing. The patient was then very quickly loaded and flown with Canadian doctor to a waiting ambulance – and an emergency operation at El Arish.





**At the conclusion of a Canadian Contingent Dominion Day celebration (Rafah, 1958), a 115 ATU DC-3 and three Otters fly in formation over the reviewing stand in a salute to UNEF Commander *by* Lt General ELM Burns <sup>xiii</sup> (white uniform, back to camera).**

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<sup>xiii</sup> Lt General E.L.M. Burns , the first UNEF Commander found his Canadian khaki uniform too similar to the British Army uniform – so he had his own white uniform designed with blue rank badges – see a description of circumstances and criticism by press in “*Between Arab and Israel*” by Lt General ELM Burns page 238



**RCAF North Star cargo aircraft embarking troops from the Lord Strathconas Horse Artillery in Calgary bound for UNEF duty in Egypt in 1956**



**Same tired Canadian soldiers from LDSH arriving in Abu Suweir Egypt UNEF 1 in battle dress!**



**Israeli soldiers raising the Israeli flag at the future site of the UNEF airport at El-Arish captured in the Suez Campaign.**

The above is a picture of the control tower at 115 ATU El Arish which was at the junction of the two runways that made an **X** when seen from the air. This control tower was the first building or scene that greeted UNEF troops (along with smell, heat and flies) arriving from Marville France via the Pisa leg of journey from Canada to begin a one year tour of duty. (In Marville France the UN flag on the tail had to be removed on ant stopover and replaced before takeoff. This was done by the simple expedient of having the UN flag painted on a piece of metal which was quickly slipped out when plane landed and slid in the slots in the tail before North Star took off again heading east to Pisa/El Arish . French Government sensibilities were thus addressed. After all they did have to leave the Suez area in rather a hurry)

## **115 ATU and the Congo**

The Republic of the Congo, a former Belgian colony, became independent on 30 June 1960. In the days that followed, disorder broke out, and Belgium sent its troops to the Congo, without the agreement of the Congolese Government, for the declared purpose of restoring law and order and protecting Belgian nationals.

On 12 July 1960, the Congolese Government asked for United Nations military assistance to protect the national territory of the Congo against external aggression.

As often happened, however, the first Canadians in the Congo were borrowed from other UN missions. Eight army officers came from UNTSO and UNEF, while eleven RCAF officers who arrived early were employed at ONUC headquarters<sup>xiv</sup>

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<http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/od-bdo/di-ri-eng.asp?IntlOpId=134&CdnOpId=156>

***Canadian Military Involvement***

- 57 Signal Squadron (later redesignated 57 Signal Unit, and assembled at Kingston from members of various Royal Canadian Corps of Signals units)
- 436 (RCAF) Squadron (two C-119 Flying Boxcars)
- Royal 22e Regiment (officers and men)
- Canadian Provost Corps <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><sup>xv</sup> <http://www.canadiansoldiers.com/history/peacekeeping/onuc.htm>



## 115 ATU in Yemen



RCAF 115 Air Transport Unit serving in Yemen. 1963-1964

### **RCAF 115 Air Transport Unit serving in Yemen, 1963-1964.**

The Caribou and the Otter assigned to the advance party from 115 A.T.U. departed for Yemen from El Arish on 11 and 12 June 1963 respectively. The Caribou went into immediate service and General Von Horn - the Yemen appointed UN Commander - reported that it suffered light damage, but with no personnel injured, while enroute from Sada to Sanaa Yemen on 17 June 1963.



**Canadian air and ground crews examine a flat tire on a Caribou based at Sanaa, Yemen after rough landing**

The official date of the implementation of United Nations Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM) was established as 4 July 1963. The Yugoslav reconnaissance troops and the Canadian air contingent of two Caribou and three Otters were all in place by 20 July 63 and by 27 July 134 (the majority of the detachment were from 115 ATU El Arish) 134 A.T.U. was able to report that it was operating six aircraft. Two Caribou were based at Sanaa, two Otters at Quizan and two Otters at Najran. The Caribou were those from 115 A.T.U., three Otters were from United Nations Operations in the Congo or ONUC and the fourth Otter was on loan from 115 A.T.U. pending the arrival of their new helicopters. The Caribou were "providing transport and liaison in the mission

area as well as to Aden, Asmara and Jeddah". The Otters had started preliminary patrols to familiarize the pilots with the area but were forced to fly in pairs due to lack of communications. It was planned to set up a radio navigation) beacon at both Quizan and Majran because of the "featureless terrain and low visibility" and absolutely no ground navigation devices at all on the ground in this part of Yemen. The living conditions at Quizan and Najran were described as primitive. At Quizan the men were billeted in a former meteorological office and subjected to intense heat.



At Najran tents were used for accommodation and the men suffered from "constantly blowing sand and dust". The Yugoslavs provided the messing for both units and the food was "reported to be good". The headquarters contingent and crews of the Caribou were billeted in a former hotel at Sanaa but in very crowded living

conditions. Their messing was hard rations supplemented by soft rations.<sup>xvi</sup> The Canadian UNEF 115 ATU and from UNOC were in Yemen only six months – but a long 6 months – then flew back to El Arish. (It was said by those who “served and suffered” in Yemen that the camp at El Arish was a “sight for sore eyes”)

## The Evacuation of El Arish

The full story of the evacuation by 115 ATU from El Arish is described in the excellent book *In the Eye of the Storm* – a History of Canadian Peacekeeping by Fred Gaffen<sup>xvii</sup>. As he describes “on the morning of 29 May 1967 a C-130 Hercules from 436 Squadron, Trenton Ontario flew over Marina the quarters of 115 ATU and landed at the El Arish airport 10 km inland. F/L Belcher was left behind as rear guard as the rest of the Marina camp was already at the airport ready to depart!



<sup>xvi</sup> <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/doc/cfhq/cfhq013.pdf>

<sup>xvii</sup> Report #16 by Lieutenant Colonel W.A.B. Douglas in 1968 of “The Withdrawal of UNEF from Egypt.”

**CP-107 Yukon in Beirut - similar to Yukon used in Pisa to withdraw personnel ferried there by Hercules from El Arish. From Pisa the Yukon flew home to Trenton Canada - note UN marking on tail**

As the Canadians departed, the Egyptian workers and house boys went on a looting rampage. Everything that could be carried went out the Marina gate. Late that afternoon Belcher -after destroying codes and other official documents left to join the waiting Yukon and departing 115 ATU staff at the airport. The aircraft departed quickly and flew over the Marina and he looked down in sadness to depart the camp - when he noticed -whoops!!..... He had forgotten to lower and take home..... the Canadian flag!

The complete background of events leading up to evacuation of 115 ATU is described in a very extensively researched report by Report #16 by Lieutenant Colonel W.A.B. Douglas in 1968 of "The Withdrawal of UNEF from Egypt." <sup>xviii</sup> The evacuation can best be described as chaotic, but in the end in approximately 25 working hours, eighteen flights of Hercules aircraft withdrew 700 men and 232,110 lbs. of equipment from El Arish to Pisa. This included the 12 Officers of 115 ATU and 96 Other Ranks -plus 6 attached from the ATU from Sharm El Sheik.

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<sup>xviii</sup> IBID at: <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/doc/cfhq/cfhq016.pdf>





**The last element of the Canadian contingent to UNEF returned to Canada on 20 June, 1967 when the three Caribou from 115 A.T.U. arrived in Trenton.**



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## ANNEX A

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## About the Author



Gordon Jenkins is a Canadian consultant of Jenkins and Associates Inc specializing in systems integration in the Internet. He has lived and worked in India, Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong and Sweden before his recent retirement. Gord is ex Canadian Military and did a total of 18 months Peacekeeping duties with UNEF 1 in Egypt /Gaza Strip and Beirut. He now is the Volunteer Coordinator at the Canadian War Museum and Co President of NATO Veterans Organization plus an amateur military historian and researcher. He recently was awarded in 2009 the *Minister of Veteran Affairs Canada Commendation* for his work in military volunteering and research.

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## **Endnotes:**